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Harp Song Of The Dane Women

Rudyard Kipling

What is a woman that you forsake her?
and the hearth fire, and the home-acre?
to go with the old, grey Widow-Maker?

She has no house to lay a guest in
but one chill bed for all to rest in
that the pale suns and the stray bergs nest in

She has no strong white arms to fold you
but the ten times fingering weeds to hold you
out on the rocks where the tide has rolled you

Yet, when the signs of Summer thicken
and the ice breaks and the birch-buds quicken
yearly you turn from our side and sicken

Sicken again for the shouts and the slaughters
you steal away to the lapping waters
and look at your ship in her winter quarters

You forget our mirth, and talk at the tables
the kine in the shed and the horse in the stables
to pitch her sides and go over her cables...

Then you drive out where the storm clouds swallow
and the sound of your oar-blades, falling hollow
is all we have left through the months to follow

Ah...but what is a woman that you forsake her?
and the hearth fire, and the home-acre?
to go with the old, grey Widow-maker?

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